30: Franco --140 (no date) 1935 Jívaro
116, 114

In our preceding number we published an article by Felice Vité, member of the Italian Expedition to the Amazon, on the Jíbaro Indians of Ecuador and on their "Tchantchas", mummified heads reduced to a tenth their natural size. In the "Revista Municipal" of Guayaquil, we now find an article by the Director of the Museum of that city, Dr. Modesto Chávez Franco, on this same subject; it is preceded by a note from the editorial staff explaining that it is reproduced from the number of August 11, 1927; in view of the interest it had aroused that number was out of print and insistent requests had been made for its reprint.

As the article published by this Revista also appears to have awakened great curiosity, we believe it opportune to reproduce the report of the Director of the Museo de Guayaquil, with the exception of paragraphs which refer to the process of mummification used by the Jíbaros which are more or less similar to the account given in our Revista. We note that Dr. Chávez Franco adopts the orthography "Tzhantzhas", rather than the spelling we have preferred, believing it to be better adapted to the phonetic of the word.

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116, 727, 171

"These reductions [KS: mummified heads] are one of the mysteries and secrets of our Indians and another of the coincidences of this race with the mummifiers of the other East. There is no one who does not marvel at this art of the forest dwellers. Our Jíbaros have the fame and "beat the record" of mummifiers; however they are not the only tribes who practive it in America.

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116, 727, 764

The making of the tzhantzha is not only for vengeance or for trophy; it appears to have something of a religious nature through the rites that precede its preparation from the severing of the enemy's head to its complete desiccation, and in the other solemn and festive ceremonies which follow in the especially named 'fiesta of the Tzhantzhas.' They are certainly trophies of war, but they are not limited to this. There are tzhantzhas and even entire bodies that are mummified of whites and of blacks. God knows what unfortunate adventurers, explorers, missionaries or rubber workers fell the victim of some imprudence of aggression or sexual assault toward some Indian woman, since the savage is atrociously suspicious and vengeful not only toward his fellow creatures but even more so toward the intruders of his forest. The Museum of the 'Heye Foundation' of New York, as well as tzhantzhas, possesses two rare examples of entire bodies: one of a Negro and another of a white with heavy beard of a Spanish or Austrian or Italian type; and, likewise, the head of an aged white man with thick [141] curly and gray hair. The entire bodies of the two have been reduced and preserved in admirable proportions to their size, being dolls of some 70 to 75 cms. Only the hands are a little large in proportion to the new body and the feet are a little deformed by the flexion of the toes upward.

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Our Museum possesses two well made tzhantzhas, one of a man and one of a woman, still a girl, both natives. Unfortunately the second has begun to decompose and is somewhat worm eaten, but our constant care appears to have arrested the process. Probably the haste in the acquisition, or the concealment to which these species of contraband are exposed produced a counteraction to mummification which ordinarily would not have happened in the hands of the macabre artificer. What is very mysterious is the proportion in which the hair, the eyebrows and eyelashes and all parts covered with hair remain. It is not understandable how the hair can also be reduced in quantity and length in proportion to the new diminutive dimensions. It is all very well that the skin despoiled of all boney armature contracts gradually, and by means of the manipulations preserves its smoothness and form. But we have no explanation for the fact that a perimeter of 60 cms. of hair, for example, on being reduced to ten and crowding the pores, does not make motley disproportionate brushes of the hair, eyebrows and eyelashes on the compressed skin. Some say that the preparers pull the hair proportionately during the process. We do not believe this, because the eyebrows and eyelashes refute the statement. How is it, that the hairs of the eyebrows and eyelashes from 5 to 7 mm, for example are reduced not only to the proportional number of eyebrows of a new born, but, what is more admirable, at lengths of 2 or more mm only and the thickness of down of a child--

likewise of the down of the beard, of the length of the hair itself, of the down of the nasal fossae, or wherever it may be? Mysteries... ..

The appearance remains unaltered. There have been cases of immediate recognition in the tzhantzha of the person to whose cranium it belonged. A North American gentleman told us inthe Museum this anecdote: 'A traveler succeeded in obtaining a tzhantzha and it turned out to be that of a white man. In the midst of the horror this unhappy sight produced in him, he was tempted to smile when they asked a large sum for it.

'I knew thisman, he said. He was a Yankee carrilano, evil beyond imagination, a scoundrel for whom the penitentiaries would perhaps have given a good sum to carry to the electric chair. After one of his last infamies, he fled, and to be sure, flight and conscience drove him to the Eastern forests of Ecuador. Who knows whether he may not have accomplished there another of his deeds, or have died of hunger or by the arrow, but this is without doubt his head. Poor man....he was worth nothing in life, but is now valuable as a museum piece. The savages have given his head a value it did not have while he was living.'

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116, 727

The head of the man that we have here appears to be of an elderly person for there are some gray hairs. He may not be a Jíbaro, but may belong to some other less cleanly tribe, for, in his hair, one can see great quantities of louse eggs and larvae which are also mummified, the poor things. The head of the female lends itself to reflection and detracts somewhat from the affirmation that the tzhantzhas were exclusively trophies of war, that is unless the ferocious warrier had carried his vengenace so far as to kill the wife of the vanquished; or perhaps it is the head of an adulteress punished with death. Ours is a girl of 12 to 14 years in appearance; it is well known that the marriages between these tribes are very premature. Because business-- now understood by the Indians in regard to the barter of guns, machetes and other weapons that the foreigners offer them--has whetted their natural malignity and made them lose respect for their natural dead, they avail themselves also of these heads in order not to have to await the late and dangerous event of a victory over their enemy, or the adultery of one of their odalisks.

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The tahantaha has an almost black or deep reddish-ochre color perhaps because of desiccation at the fire, perhaps because, as some say, their preparers as a last touch give them an unction of pulverized charcoal. The masculine tahantaha of this Museum is elegantly adorned with a crown of diminutive feathers of pretty colors embedded in a band of very fine skin of some small rodent. They have placed some attractive little earrings of colorful feathers in the ears and at the neck a tiny necklace of beads. That of the woman does not have any decoration. The large perforations which the Jíbaros make in order to insert the little rods of bamboo or cuyel as earrings are not observable in the ears nor is the perforation in the lower lip of the woman, for the same purpose, observable here. The perforations in the lobes of the ears appear to have been almost as small as those of civilized women. This may be one proof more that the victims were not members of the Jíbaro tribe.

Through a white mountaineer, we have had the opportunity to see the reduced heads of cats, sloths, and other animals without horns, for those with horns do not lend themselves to reduction because of the irreducibility of these weapons.

30: Franco--141 [5] (no date) 1935 Jívaro
116, 727, 778

The tzhantzha, we have said, fulfills a religious purpose; although its precise meaning is very difficult to interpret. The tzhantzha is a fetish that guarantees abundance, fertility, good fortune of the kindred and tribe, victory over enemies and evil to its owner, his family and friends; it bestows immortality, and serves as oracle to whomever interrogates it drinking the 'natema', an overstimulating and dream-producing vegetal liquor. If in repeated instances it fails in its power, the hair is shaved off and the head is thrown in the forest or river.

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116, 727

The 'tshantsha-tucui' or fiesta of the tshantsha [142] is described by our orientologists as follows: When the warrior has killed his enemy he knows that he must prepare for the celebration of the fiesta, under pain of suffering a thousand evils that fate will bring him, personally, and in house and chacra. For this reason, from the moment he severs the head until its complete desiccation, he goes through all the rites and secret ceremonies, since the deceased himself will not leave him in peace if he fails to. As soon as he arrives with the trophy, an old man specialized in these functions, gives the Jívaro an emetic infusion of tobacco to drink; this starts a period of fast previous to the fiesta and feasts of several days. Then the owner begins a rigorous fast that sometimes lasts months and even several years and that consists in not eating zahino killed by arrow, or certain birds or other animals. He can only eat certain little birds killed by blowgun, yucca, bananas without pepper and smoked fish. He paints his body with black lines with the dye of Genipa; on his face he paints a black stripe from ear to ear, passing under his nose. He makes the sacrifice of going without his lance and abstains from sexual contact. The preparations are: to sow two or more chacras of yucca and bananas. In the course of the preparation of the field, the sowing, the gathering, etc. a year or more must pass. After the harvest the larger quantity of chicha is made; much hunting and fishing is done and the meat and fish are stored in leaves and dried in smoke. All these are provisions for the many guests and several days of festivity. The expense is so great that sometimes several relatives or friends unite to cooperate on the cost, or sometimes various owners of tshantshas unite to share the fiesta.

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On the day appointed friends and neighbors come, some having made a ten days journey. They all wear their fiesta dress. As the initial rite, an ancient master of ceremonies sits down in the middle of the house. The Jíbaro enters now armed with his lance and carrying the trophy by its hair in his left hand. The old man rises, takes the tzhantzha and summerges it successively in a decoction of tobacco, in a receptacle with chicha, and in another with pure water. He makes the hero sit down and serves him these three liquids to his gratification. Thus, the fast ends and the hero is now free of all obligation to the deceased. He rises, takes his trophy and hangs it from the principal pillar of the house which is adorned with flowers, foliage, feathers, etc. etc. The old man begins to speak and launches upon a harangue in praise of the Jíbaro whom he calls 'brave and skilfull avenger of an offense' and full of insults and reproaches to the dead. When this is ended, the men take hands, form a circle around the head; at times as a very high honor the wife of the hero is admitted to this circle; then the enormous circle breaks to dance and unusual sardana inside the house, while other circles are forming outside, or the same but much extended circle enters through one door and leaves by another, encircling the house. The women also make their circles. From time to time the old man takes down the tzhantzha and hangs it on the neck of its owner, and the dancers pay homage to it on passing in front of it. All this goes on in the midst of the extravagant, shrieking clamor of the tundui, the drums, flutes and trumpets, etc.

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Immediately following the old man distributes the provisions, and the 'piningas' filled with whitish chicha circulate. The orgy lasts for days. When the Indian is intoxicated, he withdraws, takes an emetic, bathes himself and returns stronger and fresher than before to the hubbub and the saraband. For these days the guests live at the expense of their host. On the evening of the sixth day great bowls of excellent broth, in which they have boiled ten or more fleshy hogs, are prepared. Each takes his portion and in the morning he receives a piece of raw meat as final refreshment and remembrance which he will carry to his house or take on the road.

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116, 727, 555, 766

The warrior who has the greater number of trophies acquires the title 'Cocarama'. Cinctures for adornment in war and in the fiestas only are made with the hair of the tshantshas; and the owner never presents it or trusts it to anyone. His relatives bury him with the cincture when there is a lack of tshantshas; they do not keep the cincture, in this case, as a sacred remembrance of the valorous relative.

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The custom of making tzhantzhas has not been confined to the Jíbaros. Its existence is evident in Tiahuanacu, in Pirúo, in Manab; and the conquest observed some mummified Inca kings. This proves the contact and perhaps unity of the present Jíbaros with the ancient tribes who were civilized. The puruhaes sacrificed to the Chimborazo twice a year a young and handsome Indian girl, as well as the first born; they they embalmed them and preserved them with great veneration in their houses in beautiful vases made for the purpose.

30: Franco--142 [5] (no date) 1935 Jívaro
116, 175, 727

Ancient chroniclers say that Huáscar had sworn to make a vessel for drinking out of Atahualpa's head, and that when Atahualpa triumphed, it was he who did so with the head of the vanquished chief. Velasco denies this, bearing in mind the delicacy and grace of Atahualpa who from an early age had been the idol of his parents and who was educated in exaggerated cleanliness and elegance. In these things Atahualpa was so demanding and lordly that he would not put his feet in their sandals of gold on the floor unless the floor was swept before him; he did not spit but in the hands of some great dame, and he only ate and drank select dishes prepared with the greatest cleanliness.

39: France--142 [6] (no date) 1935 Jívaro
116. 764

Mummification was a custom from very remote times in America also, although not so perfect as in Egypt. The Incas appear to have perfected it somewhat. They extracted the viscera and substituted certain preservative herbs, coca among them, and in one of the cavities of the body they introduced a small receptacle full of balsam liquid which precipitated the desiccation; then they put the body in a large well-sewn basket made of cat tail [totora].